PUBLIC HEARING SUMMARY REPORT

PLANNING BOARD AND YEAR 35 CDBG PROGRAM APPLICANTS

JANUARY 20, 2009

In attendance:

PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS

David Streb Larry Casassa

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF Mary McCaffrey Michael O'Hara

Paula Caron, Chair Paul Fontaine, Jr. John DiPasquale Michael DiPietro Michael Hurley

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Clark Kevin Starr

Paula Caron opened the meeting at 6:00 P.M. Paula explained that the purpose of the meeting was to gather comments from Year 35 Community Development Block Grant applicants who want to say a few words about their existing programs and/or any changes; or first-time applicants who want to say something about their proposal; or the general public who wish to identify community needs.

This year thirty-three (33) CDBG proposals were received by the Planning Board totaling approximately \$3.5 million dollars in requests. Approximately \$1.2 million dollars in Year 35 funds are available.

Larry Casassa, from the Community Development Office, spoke about the CDBG Program. He referred to the handouts, which describe eligible activities under the CDBG Program. They include public facilities, public services, economic development, demolition, rehab/preservation and planning activities. In addition to the eligibility criteria, projects must meet one of three national objects. They must benefit low-moderate income persons, or aid in the prevention/elimination of slums and blight, or meet community development needs that are of an urgent nature. Seventy cents of every dollar must be spent on an activity that benefits lowmoderate income persons. Applicants were encouraged to fill out public comment forms on housing and community development needs.

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SUMMARY OF YEAR 35 PROPOSALS AND PAGE INDEX

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS

PROJECT SPONSOR YR. 35 REQUEST **YR. 34 AWARD AMOUNT**

AMOUNT

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Councilor **Clarendon Street** \$230,000 1 none

Norman Boisvert Sidewalk

Improvements

Project funds will be used to replace 2300 linear feet of deteriorated sidewalk Summary:

and curbing along the east side of Clarendon Street, from Daniels Street to Legros

Street. Improvements will comply with ADA standards.

No one was present to address this application.

Parkhill Park **Councilor Stephan Hay** \$200,000

> none <u>5</u>

Fields and Culvert and Fitchburg Parks Board

Upgrades

Summary: Project funds will be used to develop plans and specifications in coordination

with a landscape architectural firm, to upgrade the two Babe Ruth League fields

and adjacent culverts, and renovate the concession building at the park.

Improvements will comply with ADA standards.

No one was present to address this application.

Senior Center Fitchburg Senior Center \$100,000 9 none

Capital Improvement Program

Summary: Project funds will be used to make capital improvements based on a facility

needs assessment currently underway. CDBG funds will be used as a match to

apply for the Mass. Historical Commission Priority Projects Grant Program.

Larry Casassa, Deputy Director of Community Development, spoke about this application. Funds from the Friends of the Senior Center have been used to purchase the services of Haynes Lieneck and Smith, Inc. Architects to conduct a needs assessment of the senior center building. The study report will be completed by the end of January 2009.

class=Section3>

EMS Vehicle Fitchburg Fire Dept. \$140,000 none

Upgrade

Summary:

Project funds will be used to purchase a new ambulance with modern equipment, which will replace a 1985 vehicle, resulting in improved services to residents.

No one was present to address this application.

Sub Station Fitchburg Fire Dept. \$20,000 none

Feasibility Study

Summary:

Project funds will be used to fund a feasibility study for 2 new sub-stations on the South Side and in West Fitchburg. Funds will be used to hire an architectural firm to conduct the study.

David Streb, Director of Community Development, spoke about this application. A site selection study was already conducted. CDBG funds will be used to develop a schematic of the floor plan.

Point-PointFitchburg Fire\$135,000none19MicrowaveDept.Radio System

Summary:

Project funds will be used to develop a wireless communication system among municipal buildings, including public safety communication needs. 9 microwave links will be purchased at \$15,000 each. This project will eliminate the need to use leased telecommunication lines estimated at \$13,000 per year.

No one was present to address this application.

Elm Street Community Dev. Office \$480,000 none

<u>23</u>

Sidewalk Project and Twin Cities CDC

Summary: Project funds will be used to replace deteriorated sidewalks up to 4800 linear

feet, and re-set or install granite curbing in the Elm Street neighborhood.

Improvements will comply with ADA standards.

David Streb, Director of Community Development, spoke about this application.

This project will supplement the Elm Street Initiative conducted by the Twin Cities class=Section4>

CDC. Three scenarios were included in this application ranking from highest priority to lowest priority.

City Hall Community Dev. Office \$5,000 none 26

Accessible Bathroom

Design

Summary:

Project funds will be used to develop schematic design and cost estimate to convert the first floor bathroom, adjacent to the building's front foyer, into an accessible bathroom for public use. Improvements will comply with ADA standards.

David Streb, Director of Community Development, spoke about this application. This accessibility project complements the Fitchburg City Hall accessibility ramp project by providing an accessible public bathroom on the first floor. Funds will be used to develop the design and cost estimate of the project.

<u>Upper Main Street</u> <u>Community Dev. Office</u> \$20,000 none

Parking and and Department of Public Works

Streetscape Redesign

Summary:

Project funds will be used to develop plans and specifications to make improvements along Main Street, between Grove Street and the Upper Common. Improvements include designing angled parking, traffic calming, landscaping and other measures designed to enhance the pedestrian friendliness of the area.

David Streb, Director of Community Development, spoke about this application. Funds will be used to design changes to the appearance of upper Main Street area. Work will be done by city personnel.

Streetscape 33 Community Dev. Office \$300,000 none

Improvements

Summary:

Project funds will be used to replace deteriorated sidewalks, up to 2400 linear feet, granite curbing will be raised, and new driveway aprons and curb cuts will be constructed. Improvements will take place on the south side of River Street from Broad Street to the bridge by Wallace Road. Improvements will comply with ADA standards.

David Streb, Director of Community Development, spoke about this application. This project is next on the Streetscape Priority Action Plan. Improvements will be made up to Broad Street, including accessibility requirements.

class=Section5>

North Nashua Community Dev. Office River Access Project

\$125,000 none

<u>37</u>

Summary:

Project funds will be used to leverage \$265,000 in state dollars to create access to the Nashua River, by relocating a portion of the flood wall along the south edge of the Riverfront Park to the rear of the park, creating a terrace at the river's edge, changing the existing slope to the water's edge, incorporating granite blocks in an amphitheatre arrangement and making other miscellaneous improvements to allow for recreational use of the Nashua River and an expansion of the usable park area.

David Streb, Director of Community Development, spoke about this application. The city received a state grant from the Parks Program to make improvements along the Riverfront Park. Discussions are ongoing with the Army Corps of Engineers.

Park and Community Dev. Office

\$75,000

\$215,000

41

Playground Improvements

Summary:

Project funds will be used to develop plans and specifications for improvements to lower Howarth Park, including the basketball/softball fields and the amphitheatre. In addition, funds will be used to hire a designer to lead the citizen participation process for recommended improvements at the First Street Park. Improvements will comply with ADA standards.

Councilor David Clark spoke about this application. This project has been submitted in the past, but has not received funding. He reiterated that the lower Howarth Park is in need of improvements.

TOTAL PUBLIC FACILITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS PROPOSALS (12)

\$1,830,000.00

Drug Enforcement Fitchburg Police

\$100,000

\$72,000

and Strategic Dept.

<u>45</u>

Foot Patrol

Summary:

Project funds will be used to provide for overtime expenses related to drug investigations in CDBG eligible areas, and provide supplemental foot patrols in neighborhoods identified as hot spots for narcotics dealing and other illegal activity.

Captain Mark Louney from the Fitchburg Police Dept. spoke about this application. He said that the CDBG funds allow the department to work with county, state and federal law enforcement to conduct drug investigations. Without CDBG funds, this activity would not be possible.

Family Services Fitchburg Police \$54,215 none 50

Unit (Advocate) Dept.

Summary:

Project funds will be used to pay for a Civilian Advocate position. Staff will follow up with residents who are involved in domestic abuse complaints, screen for high risk cases, and provide in-house training to police officers.

Captain Mark Louney from the Fitchburg Police Dept. spoke about this application. Funds will be used for salary and fringe benefits of civilian advocate position. Currently, there is no follow up conducted by the police department when a complaint of domestic violence is made. He said this is the number one issue in policing today. It is expected that 400 people will be served within the first year.

<u>Project Learn,</u> <u>Boys & Girls Club</u> <u>\$20,000</u> <u>\$20,000</u> <u>59</u>

After-School In North Central MA.

Program and Teen Center

Summary: Project funds will be used to pay for partial salaries of the Program Director and Program Instructor and administrative costs associated with the after-school program, for Fitchburg youth ages 8-18. The program helps students with homework, learning and leisure activities; offers parent/adult involvement; collaborates with schools and other youth organizations, and offers program incentives. Approximately 90 Fitchburg youth will be served at 365 Lindell Street in Leominster. (Site of the former Julie Country Day School.)

Rocco Spagnuolo, Unit Director at the Boys & Girls Club, spoke about this application. He said the agency has been working on getting Fitchburg students to the Leominster location since they moved from Fitchburg State College. It is a

better facility allowing for new programs, in addition to assistance with homework, including astronomy, horticulture, gardening and a full size gymnasium. Approximately 225 kids attend the club each day. Typically, 100 students come from Fitchburg.

<u>Southeast</u> <u>Montachusett</u> <u>\$42,460</u> <u>\$28,000</u>

Asian Opportunity Council, Inc.

Outreach Program

Summary: Project funds will be used to pay for Coordinator's salary (30 hrs./week) plus

administrative costs to assist the Southeast Asian community with information and referral services, transportation, translation, ESOL classes and community outreach activities as appropriate. The Coordinator will develop a Southeast Asian Steering Committee to help identify needs in the community. Approximately 110 Fitchburg residents will be served at the 9 Prichard Street office.

No one was present to address this application.

Stay At Montachusett Home \$35,000 none

<u>83</u>

Home Project Care Corporation, Inc.

Summary: Project funds will be used to purchase in-home substance abuse/mental health

services for elders living in Fitchburg. MHCC will provide in-kind licensed nurse and case manager teams to identify elders in need of services and work collaboratively with Community Healthlink to provide in-home treatment. This will help elders stay at home as long as possible. Approximately 50 Fitchburg

elders of low-moderate income will be served.

class=Section6>

No one was present to address this application.

Building Leadership United Neighbors of \$65,279.09 91

<u>Inspiring Self</u> <u>Cleghorn, Inc.</u>

Sufficiency

Summary: Project funds will be used to support five staff positions and administrative costs.

Agency services include after school youth program, information and referral, food pantry, bi-lingual and bi-cultural services to Latino residents, ESOL & GED classes, and neighborhood task forces to help identify needs of Cleghorn residents. Approximately 15,000 (duplicated) people will be served. The office is

located at 2-18 Fairmount Street.

Delores Thibault-Munoz, executive director of the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center, spoke about this application. She said the agency doesn't receive any other government funds besides CDBG. Approximately 75 kids come to the center each day, primarily from the Cleghorn neighborhood. Several children from the afterschool program spoke at the public hearing. They said the afterschool program is a safe alternative to the streets and it helps them stay out of trouble. Staff assist kids with their homework and help them become civic-minded through volunteerism.

MIHN Montachusett \$20,000 none

<u>118</u>

Shelter Interfaith Hospitality Network

Summary:

Project funds will be used for a portion of the Network Director's salary and administrative costs. The shelter and day program relocated to 196 Mechanic Street in Leominster (St. Cecilia's building). Approximately 18-20 homeless families will be provided shelter, meals and case management services during the program year. It is estimated that 71% of the families will come from Fitchburg. Fourteen congregations from Fitchburg, Leominster and Lunenburg serve as host congregations at the shelter.

Art Heusser, executive director of the MIHN, and Dan Jones the board president spoke about this application. The program is a response to family homelessness in the community. Since the shelter's inception, 87 families have been served in the last five years. 14 area congregations host the families on a rotating basis, which is comprised of 450 volunteers. Families are placed into permanent housing. No federal or state funds are received by the agency. With the relocation of the program to Leominster, staff anticipate being able to host more families because the space is much larger. However, there is an occupancy cost of \$2,500 per month. A guest of the shelter said that without this program, she and her four children would be living in her car. She said the program has been very helpful to her.

class=Section7>

Hmong Cultural United Hmong of Mass. \$84,740 none

126

Awareness Services

Summary:

Project funds will be used to pay the salaries of a part-time Director, a part-time Community Specialist and a full-time Secretary, to help serve the Hmong community in Fitchburg. Services include information and referral, outreach, Youth Community Services Task Force, community education and cultural awareness program. Approximately 300-400 individuals will be served. The office location is not yet determined.

A woman from the Foundation spoke about this application. It was clarified that the Foundation changed its name to United Hmong of Mass. This is a separate program from the Southeast Asian program operated by Montachusett Opportunity Council. The speaker said that this program offers ESOL classes (English for Speakers of Other Languages), citizenship classes, and youth classes. She said the program will help prevent homelessness among the Hmong population.

Fitchburg Legal Assistance Corp. \$10,000 none

<u>143</u>

<u>167</u>

Foreclosure of Central Mass. **Defense Project**

Summary:

Project funds will be used to pay a portion of staff salaries to provide legal assistance to low-moderate income households in Fitchburg. Legal strategies will be employed to help reduce the number of foreclosures and post-foreclosure evictions. Approximately 20 Fitchburg households will be served at the 76 Summer Street office.

Attorney Anna Phillips from LACCM spoke about this application. She said the program will operate out of the 76 Summer Street office. Although their services cover all of Worcester County, the agency would like to spend more time in Fitchburg with a special focus on preventing foreclosures and homelessness through legal strategies. They work closely with the Twin Cities CDC, but there is no duplication of services.

L.U.K. Crisis Center **Transition to** \$20,000 none <u>155</u>

Independent Living Services

Summary:

Project funds will be used to pay a portion of salaries for a Case Manager and a Vocational/Educational Specialist, and associated administrative costs. Services include case management, skill building, volunteer service learning, vocational/educational support, and health and housing referrals as appropriate. Approximately 75 Fitchburg youth will be served. The main office location is at 545 Westminster Street.

No one was present to address this application.

Conversation Twin Cities \$4,000 none

Cafes CDC

Project funds will be used for staff salary and associated expenditures for the Summary:

rental of space and supplies. Staff will organize neighborhood conversations,

between 2-5 cafes, involving approximately 150 people, to help promote civic engagement.

Marc Dohan, executive director of the CDC, spoke about this application. He said this is an opportunity for neighbors to come together to talk about ideas and encourage community participation. There is no set agenda. It is a one-time request. Funds will be used to help train moderators.

Larry Casassa, Deputy Director of Community Development, reminded the Planning Board that there is a 15% cap on public service dollars, which will be an estimated \$175,000 - \$190,000 this year.

TOTAL PUBLIC SERVICES PROPOSALS (11)

\$455,694.09

class=Section8>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

<u>Micro-Enterprise/</u> <u>Twin Cities CDC</u> <u>\$25,000</u> <u>\$15,000</u>

Business Assistance

Summary:

Project will fund staff salaries for outreach activities and technical assistance to small businesses and help leverage micro-loan program (up to \$50,000) for low-moderate income individuals. An estimated 90 Fitchburg residents and 40 businesses will be served, 30 jobs will be created and/or retained, 5 businesses will expand into neglected neighborhoods, 3 loans with a value of at least \$100,000 will be secured and 10 business plans will be developed. CDC will be relocating to 470 Main Street.

Marc Dohan, executive director of the CDC, spoke about this application. Marc said he would appreciate continued funding of this project. The relocation to 470 Main Street will help the CDC in its efforts to work with Main Street businesses that otherwise could not find funding.

TOTAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS (1) \$25.000

CLEARANCE ACTIVITIES

Demolition

Community Dev. Office

\$275,000

\$89,049.08

<u>207</u>

Summary:

Project funds will be used to remove abandoned structures in CDBG areas which pose an imminent threat to public safety and which contribute to slums and blight. It is anticipated that 8-10 properties will be demolished.

David Streb, Director of Community Development, spoke about this application. He explained that the demolition program secures abandoned buildings and makes a neighborhood safe by the removal of deteriorated and vacant structures.

Councilor David Clark spoke in favor of the Demolition Program. He mentioned that a badly deteriorated building on Walnut Street in Ward 1 had been removed last year. Demolition is a visible activity where people can see the improvement.

TOTAL CLEARANCE ACTIVITIES PROPOSALS (1)

\$275,000.00

REHABILITATION AND PRESERVATION

Home Ownership Twin Cities CDC \$35,000 \$35,000

210 Opportunity Program

Summary:

Project will funds staff salaries to administer existing HOOP first-time home buyer program which provides buyer counseling and technical assistance. Approximately 75 households will receive pre-purchase counseling, 10 units will be rehabilitated and 20 families will purchase a home through the program.

Marc Dohan, executive director of the CDC, spoke about this application. He said the agency's ability to do rehab of buildings has increased. They recently had 12 participants in the homebuyer class and one person bought a home. Five non-profits have joined to create the Home Ownership Center, where clients can get one-stop service, including downpayment, energy, homebuyer, foreclosure and rehab assistance.

Code EnforcementFitchburg Board\$162,000238

\$77,000

of Health

Summary:

Project will continue to improve housing stock by a comprehensive enforcement of the State's Sanitary Code. Funds will be used to pay for 2 inspector positions and a portion of the Director's and Principal Clerk's salary. Approximately 3,000 housing units in the CDBG area will be inspected.

Steve Curry, director of the Health Dept., spoke about this application. Funds will be used to support an additional inspector in the CDBG Strategy Area. This project is integral to rehab and demolition activities. Marc Dohan from the CDC said this project addresses the issue of abandoned buildings that are non-compliant with state codes. Anna Phillips from Legal Assistance Corporation said that the Board of Health helps with an eviction defense and Councilor Clark said that the department needs the help to do the necessary inspections.

class=Section10>

Code EnforcementFitchburg Fire\$18,000none248Department

Summary:

Project funds will be used to pay for overtime expenses (approx. 10hrs. a week) related to fire code inspections in the CDBG strategy area. The project will allow for additional inspections required by state law.

No one was present to address this application.

Elder Home Montachusett Opportunity \$78,839 \$60,000

251

Repair Program Council, Inc.

Summary:

Project will fund staff and program costs for home repairs and modifications to low income elderly Fitchburg households. Improvements include installation of handrails/grab bars, screen/window/door/floor repairs, minor roof repairs, and hot water tank replacement. It is estimated that 25 homes will be served.

Larry Casassa, Deputy Director of Community Development, spoke about this application. He said we have been funding this project for years. Elder home repair allows elders to remain in their homes. The program is geared towards low-moderate income households. Marketing of the program is done through the MOC Elder Nutrition Program and Montachusett Home Care Corp. Approximately 18 households were served last year.

Sign and Facade Community Dev. Office \$110,000 \$20,000

Improvement Program

Summary:

Project funds will be used to provide matching grants and loans for an estimated three facade projects and six signage/awning projects to 9 property owners in Fitchburg's designated Slums and Blight area. Architectural costs are included.

David Streb, Director of Community Development, spoke about this application. He said this request is a continuation of the current program. There is a 70% reimbursement for facade projects up to \$20,000 and 70% for sign and awning projects up to \$2,000. Two applications recently received were from the New Players Theater Guild and the Fitchburg Historical Society.

PROJECT SPONSOR YR. 35 REQUEST YR. 34 AWARD AMOUNT

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Housing Rehab Community Dev. Office \$250,000 \$140,000

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and HOOP Program

Summary:

Project will be used to supplement funding for the City's various housing programs for homeownership and rental units. It is estimated that 10-12 housing units will be assisted, including 4 new homeowner, 4 existing homeowner and 2 rental projects.

David Streb, Director of Community Development, spoke about this application. He said this activity will supplement the Housing Revolving Loan Fund, which is being depleted in funds. It allows the city to continue to support its housing programs.

TOTAL REHABILITATION AND PRESERVATION PROPOSALS (6)

\$653,839.00

PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

<u>CDBG</u> <u>Community Dev. Office</u> <u>\$270,000</u> <u>\$265,000</u> <u>269</u>

Administration and Planning

Summary:

Project funds will provide for necessary administration of CDBG programs and sub-recipient contracts in accordance with federal guidelines, including staffing, technical services and planning activities. This also includes grant writing and administration of grant projects.

David Streb, Director of Community Development, spoke about this application. He said this is the amount of money needed to administer the CDBG Program. There is a 20% cap on Planning and Administrative activities.

PROJECT SPONSOR YR. 35 REQUEST YR. 34 AWARD

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2009 Historic Community Dev. Office \$ 25,000 none

272

Preservation Project

Summary:

Project funds will be used to hire a historic preservation consultant to conduct the nomination process for listing of historically significant properties on the National Register of Historic Places. This includes listing of historic mill buildings along River Street, which will afford developers an opportunity to use investment tax credits, and other historic properties in Fitchburg The project will be managed by the Community Development Office.

David Streb, Director of Community Development, spoke about this application. This activity supports the economic development activities taking place on River Street. Listing on the National Register allows developers to receive tax credits. There would be no impact to a property listed on the National Register. Restrictions apply only if federal or state funds are used to develop a property. This project would require the cooperation of individual property owners. However, David said that in all likelihood this project would not be funded because of the 20% cap on Planning and Administration.

TOTAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION PROPOSALS (2) \$295,000.00

A motion was made by Paul Fontaine and seconded by John DiPasquale to adjourn. The public hearing closed at 8:00P.M.

Submitted by,

Mary McCaffrey Community Development Administrator